

# **COLLECTION OVERVIEW**

## **AMERICAN POLITICAL SCIENCE**

### **I. SCOPE**

American political science encompasses the study of politics in the United States from the time of the early colonists to present times. It includes some topics classed in American history, in state and local history, and in law, but it generally falls within the J classification. Most material is classed in JK (U.S.) constitutional history and administration), although items can also be found in classes for official documents, in political science, political theory, local government, and international law and international relations.

### **II. SIZE**

According to an October 2007 search of the Library's Online Catalog, the Library held approximately 304,508 titles in class J, but the depth of the American political science collections is greatly expanded by many thousands of items in related classifications, including history and regional studies, and by the Library's extremely comprehensive holdings of U.S. government documents, manuscript collections, newspapers, U.S. doctoral dissertations, and materials held in electronic and special format collections.

### **III. GENERAL RESEARCH STRENGTHS**

Because of the Library's position and special mission within the legislative branch of the federal government, its political science collections are extremely distinguished. The Library of Congress has by far the largest national collection of material dealing with the study of American political science. Its scope is both wide-ranging and deep; its coverage, historical and current. Government documents, particularly those issued by Congress, are especially well represented. Congressional publications held by the Library are virtually exhaustive, and held in long historical runs. Browsing collections of Congressional hearings, for example, are complemented by parallel holdings in the Law Library, the federal document depository (Serial and Government Publications Division), as well as in several commercially published microform collections. Monographs in American political science date back to the colonial period and include works such as early editions of the *Federalist Papers* and works by Thomas Jefferson and Thomas Paine. The Library holds in the General Collections a complete set of state legislative journals for each state.

### **IV. ELECTRONIC RESOURCES**

The Library's American Political Science collection is increasingly made up of important electronic resources. Some assets are digitized materials from the library's numerous collections and various formats. Others are online resources available from partner institutions and libraries. The Library also collects and preserves online information of

historical importance to the Congress and the American people to foster education and scholarly importance to include Web sites.

American Memory is a compilation of some of the Library of Congress's unparalleled collections of historical documents, moving images, sound recordings, and print and photographic media. American Memory historical collections provide online access to historic government documents (U.S. Congressional documents) and other media (World War I and 1920 Election sound recordings.)

In 2000, the Library established a pilot project to collect and preserve these born digital archives of primary source materials. The Library of Congress Web Archives (LCWA) is composed of collections of archived web sites selected by subject specialists to represent web-based information on designated topics. These Web archives include but are not limited to topics related to American Political Science such as the United States National Elections of 2000 and 2002.

The library provides access to a variety of electronic resources in American Political Science including online subscription databases, CD-ROMs, and online service such as *LexisNexis Congressional*, *HeinOnline*, *PAIS*, and *JSTOR*.

## **V. AREAS OF DISTINCTION**

A very important collection in the Serial and Government Publications Division is the depository set of approximately one-half million U.S. federal government publications dating back to 1979. Although the Library of Congress was not a depository until that date, the Library has a very strong collection of federal documents dating back to the early 1800's. In addition, there are many collections of government documents in microform, which are available in the Microform Reading Room. The Serial and Government Publications Division and the Law Library of Congress have extensive national collections of state documents.

Valuable collections on American political science exist in many of the specialized collections within the Library of Congress. The Manuscript Division has custody of the papers of twenty-three U.S. presidents. Including microfilm copies for an additional six presidents, this division has the papers of every president from George Washington to Calvin Coolidge for a total of more than two million items. The Manuscript Division also has the papers of more than nine hundred past and present members of Congress.

The Rare Book and Special Collections Division has several collections relating to U.S. presidents. They include the Library of Thomas Jefferson, the Theodore Roosevelt Hunting Library, the Woodrow Wilson Library, and the Alfred Whitall Stem Collection of Lincolniana. Thomas Jefferson's library formed the nucleus of the present collection of the Library of Congress.

The Prints and Photographs Division also has collections relevant to American political science. These include the Washington Press-Photo Bureau Collection (government officials); New York World-Telegram and Sun Collection (New York politics); National

Photo Company Collection (Wilson, Harding, Coolidge, and Hoover administrations); Look Magazine Collection (national politics); the archives of U.S. News and World Report; and the Brady-Handy Collection (members of Congress).

Recordings of well-known U.S. political figures exist in the Motion Picture, Broadcasting, and Recorded Sound Division. These collections include the A.F.R. Lawrence Collection (politicians of the 1920's and 1930's); the *Meet the Press Collection* (since its first broadcast in 1945); and the National Press Club Collection (presidential speeches).

## **VI. WEAKNESSES/EXCLUSIONS**

The Library's historical collection strength in the areas of state and local government and politics appears to be somewhat greater than its current collecting strength. Many state and local libraries have much better collections of their own official documents, and more works about their particular areas than does the Library of Congress.